

“The story of a state long denied its place in soul capitals. Capouya tells quite a tale, taking us from the legends RC to KC; from Jackie Moore to Sam Moore; to many more.”

—Jeffrey M. Lemlich, author of *Savage Lost: Florida Garage Bands, the '60s and Beyond*

“Engaging and comprehensive. Spotlighting the rich and underappreciated histories of R&B, soul, funk, and disco in Florida, Capouya contributes greatly to our understanding of the music and its contexts.”

—Charles L. Hughes, author of *Country Soul: Making Music and Making Race in the American South*

“Capouya reaches back over eighty years to tell the often overlooked history of Florida’s vibrant soul music scene, painting the music and its makers with sympathetic insight and an eye for detail.”

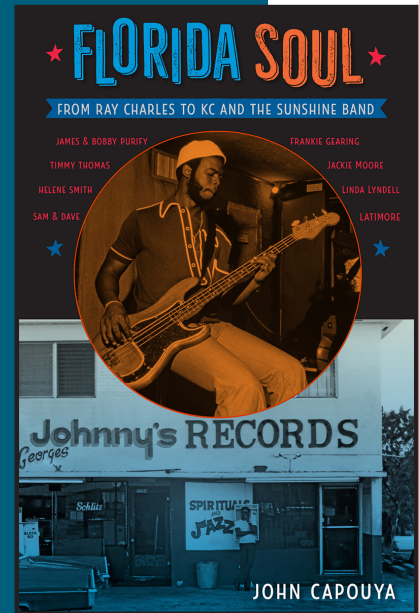
—Michael Lydon, author of *Ray Charles: Man and Music*

“Shows us the great artists who changed the nation’s music and culture. A superb read.”

—William McKeen, author of *Everybody Had an Ocean: Music and Mayhem in 1960s Los Angeles*

“Capouya smoothly weaves together the diverse sounds of one of the key regions in American music history.”

—RJ Smith, author of *The One: The Life and Music of James Brown*



FLORIDA SOUL

From Ray Charles to KC and the Sunshine Band

JOHN CAPOUYA

978-0-8130-5452-0 • Hardcover \$24.95 • 408 pages, 6 1/8 x 9 1/4, 60 b/w photos
UNIVERSITY PRESS OF FLORIDA • SEPTEMBER 2017

For more information, contact the UPF Marketing Department:

(352) 392-1351 x 232 | marketing@upress.ufl.edu

Available for purchase from booksellers worldwide.

To order direct from the publisher, call the University Press of Florida: 1 (800) 226-3822.

Credit: Suzanne Williamson



JOHN CAPOUYA

teaches journalism and nonfiction narrative at The University of Tampa. He mentors students in UT's lowresidency Creative Writing MFA program, as well as working with private writing clients. During his journalism career he was an editor at *Newsweek* and *SmartMoney* magazines, *New York Newsday*, and the *New York Times*. *Florida Soul* is his third book; his previous one, the biography *Gorgeous George*, is being adapted into a feature film.

John Capouya

is available for interviews and appearances



For more information, contact the UPF Marketing Department:

(352) 392-1351 x 232 | marketing@upress.ufl.edu

Available for purchase from booksellers worldwide.

To order direct from the publisher, call the University Press of Florida: 1 (800) 226-3822.

Q&A

with
JOHN CAPOUYA
author of
Florida Soul

Why did you decide to write a book about Florida soul artists?

Soon after I moved to Florida to teach at the University of Tampa, I discovered that so many of the soul artists I grew up listening to in New York and New Jersey—Sam & Dave, Timmy Thomas, Betty Wright, Latimore—had roots in this state. Then I heard that “The Twist,” probably the biggest song and dance craze of my lifetime, originated in Tampa. When I looked into it, it seemed to be true. That’s when I knew I had something to add to the history and understanding of this music.

Why do you think Florida isn’t usually thought of as one of the soul capitals of the country?

Cities like Detroit (Motown) and Memphis (Stax and Hi Records) each have one or at most two recognizable soul sounds. But Florida is so big and the styles so diverse that most soul fans—even diehards—haven’t put the whole musical mosaic together. Sam and Dave, the legendary duo known for “Soul Man,” met in Miami, but were best-known for their recordings at Stax in Memphis, so that may have thrown some listeners off. Lastly, I suspect that because Ray Charles

For more information, contact the UPF Marketing Department:

(352) 392-1351 x 232 | marketing@upress.ufl.edu

Available for purchase from booksellers worldwide.

To order direct from the publisher, call the University Press of Florida: 1 (800) 226-3822.

famously sang “Georgia on My Mind,” many music-lovers think he hailed from that state instead of Florida!

What surprised you while researching for this book?

I was surprised and really pleased by how willing and cooperative my soul sources turned out to be. They didn’t know me from Adam, but the vast majority really wanted their stories told, and they were excited that Florida’s contributions to soul music were finally going to get recognized.

You conducted a lot of personal interviews with soul artists for this book. What was that experience like?

You know, sitting down with all these accomplished singers, musicians, and producers was probably the best part of this whole process. (Especially since writing is so notoriously difficult.)

I sat down with Sam Moore of Sam and Dave in his living room and we talked for hours about his career and especially his evolution as a singer since those early days. Timmy Thomas showed me on his keyboard how he came up with the chord changes and bass line for his biggest hit, “Why Can’t We Live Together.” I learned so much about how this music is made and the people who made it.

How has your taste in music evolved over the years? Were you always a soul music fan?

One of my first memories is hearing salsa music when we lived in New York’s Spanish Harlem. Later, growing up in the suburbs, I became a huge blues fan and harmonica player. Then I was introduced to soul, surprisingly enough, by a friend of mine’s mother who played James Brown and Archie Bell around the house. Most recently, I’ve gotten into jazz, but nothing too abstract; I need a melody I can follow.

Who are your favorite musical artists? How did they influence your work on this book?

Artists who really speak to me include the great blues harmonica player Little Walter, who showed how versatile and sophisticated that instrument can be. I think the same is true of soul music; people tend to think it’s all heart, but, as I came to understand, there’s a tremendous amount of craft involved in putting

For more information, contact the UPF Marketing Department:

(352) 392-1351 x 232 | marketing@upress.ufl.edu

Available for purchase from booksellers worldwide.

To order direct from the publisher, call the University Press of Florida: 1 (800) 226-3822.

that emotion across. Otis Redding is one of the most moving singers I've ever heard, and I found out that quite a few Florida soul artists were influenced by, and friends with, him. Ray Charles has always been a favorite, and in my research I came to understand how his gospel, jazz, blues, and even country influences came together in his enduring work.

If you were going to be marooned on a desert island and could only take a few soul songs with you what would they be?

I'd try to smuggle in 10 cuts, half by Florida artists and half by others:

Florida soul:

1. "Hold On, I'm A Comin,'" Sam and Dave
2. "Lonely Avenue," Ray Charles
3. "Clean Up Woman," Betty Wright
4. "Why Can't We Live Together," Timmy Thomas
5. "What A Man," Linda Lyndell

Others:

1. "I'd Rather Go Blind," Etta James
2. "Cold Sweat," James Brown
3. "Try a Little Tenderness," Otis Redding
4. "What Does It Take," Jr. Walker & the All Stars
5. "Steal Away," Jimmy Hughes

What is it about soul music that has made it such an enduring part of American culture and beloved in many other parts of the world?

I think author Peter Guralnick had it right when he called soul music "a message from the heart." The late singer Sharon Jones took it a step further, saying, "What comes from the heart, reaches the heart." Soul is an American—fundamentally an African-American—form of expression, but the emotions it conveys are universal. At the same time, not everyone can do it. Think about how many soul singers and musicians we still listen to today, many of them 50 years after they were first recorded. They were and are exceptional people, and I hope my book gives readers that message.

For more information, contact the UPF Marketing Department:

(352) 392-1351 x 232 | marketing@upress.ufl.edu

Available for purchase from booksellers worldwide.

To order direct from the publisher, call the University Press of Florida: 1 (800) 226-3822.

What do you hope readers will enjoy the most about your book?

The information in the book comes directly from the people who made this classic music. The book's chapters are their stories; I've just told them the best ways I can. I also hope readers get nostalgic, as I did, re-living the golden age of soul, funk, and disco. Betty Padgett, a Miami singer who deserves to be better known, has a song called "Let Your Mind Go Back," in which she references platform shoes, bellbottom pants, Afro hairdos, and dances like the Jerk and the Fly. It certainly took me back . . .

For more information, contact the UPF Marketing Department:

(352) 392-1351 x 232 | marketing@upress.ufl.edu

Available for purchase from booksellers worldwide.

To order direct from the publisher, call the University Press of Florida: 1 (800) 226-3822.

Introduction

The Soul State of Florida

IT'S A WINTER NIGHT IN AMERICA, and "Monday Night Football" is about to air on ESPN. First, though, comes the lead-in show, "Monday Night Countdown." The inherent challenge here, it seems to an outsider, is to make more than two hours of older men sitting down, talking, and *not* playing football remotely compelling to watch. To keep the energy level high, the network uses brash-talking commentators, action-packed game highlights, fancy graphics, and, very selectively, music.

As the show goes to its last commercial, the camera pulls back from the broadcasters and an up-tempo song blares briefly. It's "Hold On, I'm A Comin'," powerfully declaimed by Sam and Dave, the classic soul duo formed in Miami's Overtown neighborhood. That anticipatory song was a #1 hit on *Billboard* magazine's Hot Rhythm & Blues Singles sales chart in 1966—and just about a half-century later, ESPN's producers chose it to introduce their football game.

Now it's May, and thirteen-year-old New Yorker Elena Messinger is celebrating her bat mitzvah in a 6th Avenue hotel. The entertainment includes much food and a man cutting uncannily accurate silhouettes of guests out of folded paper, followed by music and dancing. A saxophonist plays over recorded music, while the DJ exhorts the throng to "come on!" via their wireless mikes. Smiles of recognition break out across the crowded, high-ceilinged hall at the very beginnings of "Get Down Tonight" and "That's the Way (I Like It)," 1970s hits by KC and the Sunshine Band. Multigenerational dance gyrations ensue.

As the weather reference in its name infers, that band is from Florida, too. Originally, they were called the Sunshine Junkanoo Band, a nod to the Bahamian music Harry Wayne Casey, aka KC, heard in Miami and incorporated into their sound. Improbably, Casey still leads a current iteration of the Sunshine Band, touring and performing in his mid-sixties.

Now it's autumn. Walking toward East 6th Street, Austin, Texas', main drag for bars and entertainment, passersby can't help but notice an outpost of the Coyote Ugly Saloon chain. For one thing, the smell of spilled beer is rank. For another, the music coming from the bar's outdoor speakers is resoundingly loud. The college students in this contingent immediately recognize "Hotline Bling," a 2015 hit by the Canadian rapper Drake. But it's their "old school" professor (that's their term; I think they mean it affectionately) who identifies the haunting organ track underneath Drake's singing. It's "Why Can't We Live Together," a plea for peace and tolerance by Florida soul singer Timmy Thomas, released in 1972. (The "Bling" lyrics are concerned with very different matters.)

Thomas' song, born of the Vietnam War and the African American civil rights struggle, has since been covered by Sade, Joan Osborne, and Carlos Santana, among others. The song's greatest impact, however, was felt half-way across the world from Florida. "Why Can't We Live Together," which contains the line, "*No matter what color, you are still my brother,*" became an anthem of the black liberation movement in apartheid-era South Africa. Thomas performed the song in Johannesburg while Nelson Mandela was in prison and returned to sing it again in 1994 when Mandela was elected that country's president.

These Florida songs and artists all surfaced during my writing of this book, so, naturally, I noticed. My antennae for passionate vocals and funky sounds with Florida origins were up. Here's the other thing I noticed: None of these artists' Florida origins were discussed or even alluded to; it never came up. Perhaps the loudest silence came when the Seattle Symphony performed its "Tribute to Ray Charles." Press coverage declared that Charles "spent a significant part of his career in Seattle." There was no mention of the fact that Charles was a Florida soul artist, perhaps the greatest of them all. The late singer, piano player, composer, arranger, and bandleader—known during his Florida decades by his given name, Ray Charles Robinson—was raised here, went blind here, became a musician here, and made his first recordings here. At one point he even played in a Tampa country and western band, the Florida Playboys, and in 1951 recorded a composition of his called "St. Pete Florida Blues."



Ray Charles circa 1949, just after he left his home state of Florida. Courtesy Joel Dufour.

In the years immediately following World War II, the talent level was so high and the pool around him so deep that, talented as he was, “RC” struggled to make it as a working professional—and at times, to eat. Later in his career he attributed his success in part to this cutthroat environment, saying, “Florida toughened me up.”

Much of the music that he and the other Florida performers above produced endures today—still enjoyed, still part of our collective culture and our collective commerce—forty to fifty years after it was first issued into a

very different country. These artists and the classic songs of the Florida soul canon continue to demand attention, renewed or continued.

Somehow, though, Florida soul in the aggregate remains largely unrecognized, both in and outside of this state. Although the term “southern soul” is widely used and accepted, the South it conjures up seems to end before it reaches Florida’s borders. In the otherwise excellent 2004 soul documentary, *Only the Strong Survive*, the narrator says: “When soul spread north from Memphis to Philly, Chicago and Detroit, where it became Motown, pop music was changed forever.” Again, Florida gets no play.

When most listeners, even knowledgeable devotees of this genre, think of soul hotbeds, their minds will likely move to Memphis, with its illustrious Stax and Hi record labels; to Muscle Shoals, Alabama, home to the FAME recording studio; or to Detroit and the Motown sound. (That is, if they consider Motown soul; many don’t, calling it pop.) New Orleans may deservedly come up, as can Macon, Georgia, from which Little Richard and James Brown emerged in the 1950s, and Philadelphia, where Kenny Gamble and Leon Huff created TSOP, the Sound of Philadelphia, in the 1960s and 1970s.

And that’s not right—or that’s not entirely right. Soul soared in those places, but Florida’s contributions—to soul, rhythm and blues, funk, and 1970s dance-soul or disco—are equally rich, and deep. In the thirty-five-year swath between 1945 and 1980, Florida produced some of the most electric, emotive soul music this country’s ever heard. Great singers, musicians, and songwriters plied their crafts here in the service of a fine, funky art. DJs on local AM radio stations like WTMP in Tampa, WBAS in Tallahassee, WJAX in Jacksonville, and WFEC and WMBM in Miami spun little vinyl 45-rpm discs with Florida labels on them—labels with names such as Jayville, Tener, Marlin, Leo, Alston, D & B, Glades, and Bound Sound. Performed live, this music rang out—and found responsive audiences—in nightclubs, dance halls, ballrooms, “casinos,” and juke joints all over the state, from Miami and Tampa Bay to Gainesville, Jacksonville, and Pensacola, and in between.

Then as now, this music’s reach extended far beyond the Sunshine State, stirring limbs and loins all over the United States and beyond, especially in the United Kingdom and Japan, where American soul music has long had strong followings. Especially in soul’s golden age, the 1960s and 1970s, Florida soul shone. Yet that remains a hidden history, an underappreciated cultural heritage.

This book aims to document and celebrate that legacy. Its most ambitious goals are to expand the history and cosmology of soul and to prove that Florida and its cities deserve their own prominent places therein—to redraw that misshapen musical map. Until that happens, though, millions will continue to listen, dance and sing to this music—to love it—without understanding just how many of their beloved touchstones have Florida in their geological makeup.

I didn't. Growing up in New York and New Jersey I was drawn to the soul music of the 1960s and 1970s. When Betty Wright came on the radio singing her hit "Clean Up Woman" or when one by Sam and Dave or Timmy Thomas came on the radio, I turned those songs *up*. I especially remember banging on dashboards to the driving rhythm and blasting horns of "Funky Nassau" by the strangely named group, the Beginning of the End. But the DJs on WABC and WNJR (in Newark) didn't say—had no reason to say—"You know, Betty Wright is from Florida" or "'Funky Nassau' is on the Alston label, based in Miami."

I was too young to get caught up in the global outbreak of Chubby Checker's song "The Twist" in the early 1960s. But millions who did, from San Francisco to Scandinavia, had no idea this little hip-shimmy of a dance and the song celebrating it almost certainly originated in the black enclave around Central Avenue in Tampa. As chapter 4 relates, R&B singer Hank Ballard wrote that tune, and first recorded it, in Florida.

Until I began teaching at the University of Tampa I had never heard of the late Henry Stone—the Berry Gordy or leading impresario of Florida soul. As I discovered, he recorded virtually all the important soul artists who came from or passed through Miami at his T.K. Productions, from Ray Charles, James Brown, and Sam and Dave to Betty Wright and including KC and the Sunshine Band. (Both Casey and Rick Finch were working for him when they cofounded that group.) This state's soul yield was not as concentrated as in Memphis, where two labels, Stax and Hi, essentially held sway. Yet, especially in the 1970s, Miami still dominated, through its size and stature, and through Stone. (See chapter 14.) In 1976 an Associated Press story on T.K. went out across the country with the headline "'Miami Sound' Dominates Floors," meaning dance floors.

Artists and groups with Florida roots have certainly earned respect and renown. But that glory is specific, individualized; it doesn't acknowledge any shared context or the ways and reasons they became so accomplished where they did. One likely underlying reason is that some important artists,

including Ray Charles and Sam and Dave, lay the foundations of their success in Florida but gained their greatest fame after they'd left the state. Sam and Dave, for example, broke through nationally after they teamed up with songwriters/producers Isaac Hayes and David Porter at Stax.

An even more important reason why this state's contributions go unrecognized, I believe, is that there is no one distinct Florida soul sound, nothing as identifiable as, say, the Memphis soul stew. Instead, there's a unique amalgam of styles, trends, and regional approaches that other states and soul enclaves are hard-pressed to match. That lack of one metanarrative—or the profusion of sonic narratives—may actually be the essential Florida soul story.

No doubt the state's enormous size contributed to this musical diversity. Due to geography and their Alabaman influences and collaborators, the music of James and Bobby Purify, created in the Panhandle, has been called Flora-Bama soul. Although they did hard-driving soul tunes as well, some of their work with Muscle Shoals songwriters Dan Penn and Spooner Oldham has pop and country flavorings. The deliberate, forlorn song the Purifys are most famous for, "I'm Your Puppet," sounds nothing like the driving funk their contemporary Lavell Kamma, of Jacksonville, put out nightly on Florida's chitlin' circuit. And in neither of those cities would you be likely to hear soul music with Caribbean inflections, as you would in Miami.

It's not just due to geography; this variety of styles in Florida soul is also based in the differing sensibilities of individual producers. Papa Don Schroeder, for example, who produced "Puppet," had a way of combining deep soul and pop sweetness that simply clicked, musically and commercially. Willie Clarke of Deep City Records in Miami wanted to hear lots of horns and plenty of percussion, sounds he helped produce when he was one of the Marching 100, the famed band of Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University (FAMU). Helene Smith, the Deep City singer profiled in chapter 13, says their Miami soul label emulated "that full, kick-butt sound, like the FAMU marching band with all the horns."

The Miami sound that came out of Stone's T.K. Productions in the 1970s is the most distinct and dominant musical aesthetic, a product of the stellar house band or regular studio musicians there. That group included Timmy Thomas on organ and Willie Hale, aka Little Beaver, who remains a cult figure among guitarists. (See chapter 15 for more on the T.K. musical family.) "Funky Nassau" and the junkanoo music that KC and the Sunshine Band drew on show how island culture enriched the Miami sound, and of



Sam Moore (*right*) and Dave Prater in an early performance; they met and formed their great soul duo in Overtown. Photo by Michael Ochs Archives/Getty Images.

course in that location there were Latin influences as well. Little Beaver, who's from Arkansas, said “the Latin flavor was something I picked up on in Miami.” He already had the African part of the Afro-Cuban musical blend inside him, the guitarist noted.

Willie Clarke of Deep City (who later worked with Stone at T.K.) went even broader, including northward, in describing the acoustic admixture he contributed to: “The Miami sound is stirred up with the ingredients from the Bahamas, Jamaica, Alabama, Georgia—all mixed together.” Steve Alaimo, a Miami-based blue-eyed soul performer and T.K. producer, even detects an element of rock and roll in this South Florida fusion. He calls it “white-boy bass,” referring to Ron Bogdon, who played on many T.K. hits. (Chocolate Perry, the other T.K. bass stalwart, is African American, though his nickname derives from his sweet tooth, not from his skin color.)

WHAT IS MEANT HERE BY “SOUL?” Succinctly and therefore a bit roughly put, this is an African American musical form that combines gospel-derived vocal styles with blues- and jazz-based instrumental underpinnings. In her early (1969) and important book, *The Sound of Soul: The Story of Black Music*, Phyl Garland describes soul as “a fusion of blues, jazz and gospel.”

Soul vocalists certainly employ blues singing techniques, especially flatted or “blue” notes, but most would agree that gospel—especially gospel singing—is the heart of soul. When producer Brad Shapiro worked for Atlantic Records, producing music by Wilson Pickett and Jacksonville's Jackie Moore, among others, he was often teamed up with Floridian musician, songwriter, and producer Dave Crawford. Praising Crawford's piano work in a *Florida Soul* interview, Shapiro said: “His playing was straight out of the church; he played that church groove, which was where soul came from. After all, ‘soul’ is a church term, right?”

In chapter 7 Sam Moore of Sam and Dave explains how he and his partner brought the passionate exhortations and call-and-response of the black church to their dynamic soul performances. (Singers in both genres also use melisma: extending single lyrical syllables into multinote runs.) Quite a few soul classics, including Ray Charles songs, were direct transpositions of gospel songs, with more earthly sentiments expressed (see chapter 1).

Many experts see rhythm and blues, or R&B, as distinct from soul, usually pegging the former as an earlier style, most prominent in the 1940s and 1950s. Soul emerged later than classic R&B, in the 1960s and 1970s, and in a very different cultural context. Rhythm and blues was performed